



IOWA RECOVERY TIMES

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Rebuild Iowa Office Submits Preliminary Transition Plan

The Rebuild Iowa Office (RIO) has submitted a transition strategy to the Governor's office and Iowa legislators for the office's June 30, 2011, sunset.

The RIO was established by an Executive Order in June of 2008 to address the historic weather disasters which occurred over the spring and summer. In February 2009, the Iowa General Assembly unanimously supported House File 64, formally establishing the RIO as a temporary state agency through a sunset

date of June 30, 2011, and requiring the RIO to complete a transition plan by Jan. 1, 2011. The report may be accessed by visiting http://www.rio.iowa.gov/resources/reports/2010-12_Transition_Strategy.pdf.

The transition strategy was largely created by state and local recovery partners who have worked with the RIO to find solutions for continued improvement toward a sound recovery. This input has been invaluable for both ongoing recovery activities and the development of this

transition plan.

The plan was submitted with the idea that it will change as the end date of the office nears.

The strategy outlines many of the State's accomplishments and remaining needs in achieving recovery goals, and details how continuing recovery efforts may be integrated into other state agency programs and services. The document also recommends a framework for the state to use in future long-term disaster recovery efforts.

Businesses Rethink Strategy After 2008 Flood

Shannon Debner of DPI Quality Custom Finishes in Cedar Rapids, believes 2011 will be the year "things will fall into place and really get better."

Debner, who owns the company with her husband Mark, said the last two years have been more about getting their 2008 flood-affected business back on track by accessing recovery programs such as Jumpstart, and rebuilding their business model. Now, they can look forward to a plan that is about normal business growth, not recovery, Shannon said.

DPI Custom Quality Finishes paints interiors and exteriors of predominately new residential and commercial buildings. In June 2007, the Debners purchased a company which makes pre-stained products such as trim molding. This acquisition expanded the services DPI could offer, but just one year later the Debners faced a setback.

"Before June of 2008, I was excited about purchasing a new business to add to what we had, and then the flooding hit," she said. "With much of the recovery work behind us, this year we will

do much better."

The flood of 2008 left behind much devastation for Cedar Rapids, to date, more than 80 percent of flood-affected Cedar Rapids businesses – over 900 – have re-opened. Nationally, an average of 55 percent of businesses close within the first three years after a natural disaster.

Many flood-affected Cedar Rapids businesses have taken advantage of local assistance available for post-disaster development. Business Long Term

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County Officials See Benefits in Comprehensive Planning Grants

Grant awards from the Iowa Smart Planning: Local Comprehensive Planning Grant Program have generated excitement for officials in two northeastern Iowa counties.

The grants for Winneshiek and Dubuque counties are among 38 awards recently made by the Iowa Department of Economic Development and the Rebuild Iowa Office. The \$1 million for the comprehensive planning grants came through federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Disaster Recovery funds provided to Iowa in response to the storms and floods of 2008.

The grant program is based on the Iowa Smart Planning Principles and local comprehensive planning guidance contained in Iowa's Senate File 2389, which was

signed into law on April 26, 2010. Since passage of the legislation, city planners, clerks, administrators, council members, boards of supervisors, and county planners have strategized how these principles can be successfully applied to their local communities.

Larry Lelifeld, community and transportation planner for the Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission, noted, "We believe in the goals of smart planning, including consideration of land use, water conservation and preservation, hazard analysis and how those in combination, affect each community." The Commission will help lead Winneshiek County's comprehensive planning updates and will also be providing services for a grant received by Fayette County.

A \$60,000 grant awarded to Winneshiek County is for a multi-jurisdictional plan that includes the communities of Calmar, Castalia, Decorah, Fort Atkinson, Jackson Junction, Ossian, Ridgeway and Spillville – all the communities in the county and the unincorporated areas.

"The opportunity provided by the grant program couldn't have come along at a better time," he said. "There was a lot of interest and excitement about the grants from many of our communities. When times are tough and the economy is down, collaboration to maximize resources is key. We have been reaching out to our region and talking about and trying to incorporate the principles of Smart Planning. Our smaller communities need the most help with comprehensive planning, and have the fewest resources."

Rebuild Iowa Office Releases January 2011 Quarterly Report

Earlier this month, the RIO released its January 2011 Quarterly Report. The report provides an update on the progress and challenges that remain in Iowa's recovery from the 2008 floods and tornadoes.

This Quarter's report highlights several milestones including:

- New housing construction programs have resulted in 845 new homes and more than 2,000

new apartment units

- More than 1,000 additional structures have been demolished
- Case management is now being provided for the 2010 disasters
- Plans developed for use of \$10 million in CDBG disaster funding awarded in summer 2010, to implement floodplain management legislation passed in 2010.

- Increased caps on business programs to allow businesses to access funding needed to recover.
- Successfully closed out the RIO's \$3 million grant from the Economic Development Administration by completing a statewide Economic Recovery Strategy.

To access the Report, as well as previous reports, visit the RIO Web site at www.rio.iowa.gov.

BUSINESSES (continued)

Recovery (BLTR), an initiative of the Cedar Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce, is working to meet the changing needs of flood-affected businesses in Cedar Rapids. The 2011 focus for the organization's mentors will be helping businesses achieve growth and progress.

The Debners are still taking advantage of the mentoring, which included helping them see that they

had to expand their business beyond their pre-2008 territories.

"We had a marketing plan that was all new for us in 2008, but with growth and then the flooding we had to spend more money with extra advertisement," Shannon said. "We have learned that marketing is keying in on where we want to do business, as opposed to just getting our name out there any way we can."

Shannon hopes to one day mentor other disaster-affected businesses and help others through the red tape and paperwork that comes with disaster recovery. "Other businesses would benefit from a set strategy and a business case manager and mentor from the very beginning of any recovery process," she said.